

October 1966

Education and Nation-Building in Laos

Joel Halpern

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, jmhalpern@anthro.umass.edu

Marilyn C. Tinsman

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/anthro_faculty_pubs



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Halpern, Joel and Tinsman, Marilyn C., "Education and Nation-Building in Laos" (1966). *Comparative Education Review*. 9.
https://scholarworks.umass.edu/anthro_faculty_pubs/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anthropology Department Faculty Publication Series by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

COMPARATIVE EDUCATION REVIEW

The official organ of the Comparative Education Society

Vol. 10, No. 3

October 1966

<i>Editorial</i>	<i>G.Z.F.B.</i>	377
Educational Planning and Individual Freedom	<i>Theodore R.Sizer</i>	381
John Dewey's Ideas in China—1919 to 1921	<i>Nancy F. Sizer</i>	390
A Comparison in Educational Philosophy: Jose Vasconcelos and John Dewey	<i>Stanley D. Ivie</i>	404
Conceptual Tools for Research in Comparative Education	<i>Robert D. Carey</i>	418
The Education of the Academically Gifted in Europe: Some Comparisons	<i>W. D. Halls</i>	426
Ultimate Deterrents: Punishment and Control in English and American Schools	<i>M. A. Eckstein</i>	433
Nationalism in the History Textbooks of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria	<i>John Georgeoff</i>	442
Higher Education and Political Development in Syria and Lebanon	<i>Munir A. Bashshur</i>	451
Educational Development in Ghana and Guatemala: Some Problems in Estimating "Levels of Educational Growth"	<i>T. David Williams</i>	462
Potential Elites in Turkey: The Social Origins of Lise Youth	<i>Andreas M. Kazamias</i>	470
Ethiopia's Use of National University Students in a Year of Rural Service	<i>David C. and Frances F. Korten</i>	482
Iran's Educational Revolution—Military Style	<i>Lawrence M. Brammer</i>	493
Education and Nation Building in Laos	<i>Joel M. Halpern and Marilyn Clark Tinsman</i>	499
World-Wide Exchange of Information on Education	<i>Martena Sasnett</i>	508
A Design for Teaching "Comparative Education"	<i>Harold J. Noah and M. A. Eckstein</i>	511
Recent Events in World Education	<i>Franklin Parker and Paul Unger</i>	514
Book Reviews, Book Notes, Film Notes, Other References	<i>J.A.L.</i>	525

Editor: George Z. F. Bereday. *Associate Editors:* John A. Laska; Harold J. Noah.

Contributing Editors: Donald K. Adams; Philip J. Foster; Stewart E. Fraser; Andreas M. Kazamias. *Editorial Assistant:* Muriel Allen.

Editorial Office: Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, N. Y. 10027

Business Editor: C. C. Chandler. *Assistant Business Editor:* T. F. Keough.

Business Office: Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

EDUCATION AND NATION-BUILDING IN LAOS

JOEL M. HALPERN AND MARILYN CLARK TINSMAN

As one of the new states emerging from a colonial past, the Southeast Asian Kingdom of Laos, like a number of African and Middle Eastern states, does not fit in with concepts of the nation state. They possess something less than Emerson's characteristics of an ideal "nation," i.e. a fixed geographic boundary, a cohesive ideology, a common ethnic group, a unifying economic structure, and a shared history and culture.¹ Yet this small land-locked country, certainly outwardly the least-favored part of the former French Indo-Chinese complex, lacks all of these qualities with exception of a fixed geographic boundary to a marked degree. These indicators of unity and common experience have not increased greatly in degree since 1949, when independence from France was obtained. By way of illustration, a survey of the late 1950's demonstrated that the name of the late king of Luang Prabang, who had ruled for 56 years, was known by a relatively small proportion of the population.² A public opinion poll conducted in the mid-1950's suggested that at that time less than half the population knew the name of their country.³

This monsoon land of varied climate and terrain ranges from the wet rice-growing valley of the Mekong River to the mountainous provinces of the north and east inhabited by tribally organized slash-and-burn agriculturalists, ethnically distinct from the politically dominant valley-dwelling Lao. The population is overwhelmingly rural, with over 90 per cent of Laos' roughly 2,500,000 people estimated to rely on agriculture for a living. Industrial or commercial development has been virtually negligible, with what exists dependent primarily upon foreign aid. Cities are little more than small towns, the largest being Vientiane, the seat of government, which reported a population of 68,000 in 1959; the royal capital, Luang Prabang, had about 11,000; only

three others, all provincial capitals, had populations in excess of 5,000.

Transportation difficulties, which make overland travel difficult among many of the 16 provinces, help to explain the weakness of French colonial penetration into Laos as compared with Cambodia and Vietnam. Similar transportation and communication problems impede the Royal Lao Government's (RLG) effectiveness in implementing any sort of program on a national basis. Most provinces are cut off from the capital city, and small planes are the only means of conveyance. While the river system provides a natural transportation network, it is effective only in reaching the valley-dwelling Lao. In light of these and other factors, Laos is characterized by a low economic productivity aggravated almost since the nation's inception by a heavy military burden; despite considerable investments of foreign aid, principally from the United States and France, there continue to be serious doubts of the country's economic viability under the present circumstances. Not the least among the obstacles to national development is the fact that Laos has the highest rate of illiteracy in Southeast Asia, with estimates ranging between 80 and 85 per cent.⁴

Social and Ethnic Divisions

At least 50 per cent of the total population is non-Lao.⁵ This non-Lao portion of the country's inhabitants is composed of various tribal groups of diverse historical origin, speaking languages which are mutually unintelligible. Regional separateness contributes to the division between these tribal—or "mountain"—people of the northern and eastern highlands and the valley Lao. Buttressing the divisions among major groups in society—the Lao elite, the Lao villager, and the tribal minorities—are the differences in type or amount of formal edu-

cation which has been available to each group.

In addition to the national minority groups, are the "foreign" minorities concentrated mainly in the towns. It is significant to note that until recently the urban centers of Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and the provincial capitals were inhabited by a larger proportion of foreign minority groups than Laotians.⁶ A 1958 survey estimated some 6,000 Europeans (including Americans), 9,000 Vietnamese, 30,000 Chinese, slightly over 1,000 Pakistani and Indians, and a few hundred Filipinos living in Laos.⁷ Vietnamese had been imported by the French to perform lower-level administrative functions in the colonial bureaucracy, and the Chinese—as in other Southeast Asian countries—have tended to dominate economic enterprise:⁸ as such, both occupy positions of influence which vastly outweigh their numbers. However, except to point out that the Vietnamese have utilized mainly French-type urban educational institutions and the Chinese have established their own schools, the education of foreign minorities will not be treated here.

The Lao Elite. The Lao constitute the country's largest ethnic group. Its royalty can trace its ancestry to the fourteenth-century kingdom of Lan Xang (Land of a Million Elephants), which then encompassed some of what is now neighboring Thailand and Cambodia. In the seventeenth century Lan Xang was divided into the three kingdoms of Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Champassak. The continuity of leadership is illustrated by the fact that the present king is a descendant through the Luang Prabang kingdom to the Lan Xang royal line.⁹ Lao descended from the courts of the princely states occupy to a considerable degree prominent positions in the constitutional monarchy's administrative structure and comprise what may be called the "Lao elite," which is, of course, the Laotian ruling elite as well. Its members, probably representing no more than 200 families,¹⁰ live mainly in Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Pakse or the other provincial capitals.

The Lao elite is further distinguished from the village Lao and minority ethnic groups by its general use of French language and assimilation of certain aspects of French culture. One result of limited French penetration was the paucity of colonial educational provisions for the area. What few school places were open to local people were utilized by the established pre-colonial Lao elite. Since these schools followed the French colonial pattern of mirroring educational practices in France, the Lao elite learned the French language, absorbed French history and culture, and, upon completing the secondary course (which was not offered in Laos until the Pavie Collège opened in Vientiane in 1925¹¹), a few students from wealthy families undertook higher education in France. An examination of the present generation of government leaders' educational backgrounds reveals almost without exception French-type schooling and frequently travel or higher education in France itself. For example, the current king, Savang Vatthana; the neutralist head of the coalition government, Souvanna Phouma; and Souvanna Phouma's half-brother—who is the leader of the Pathet Lao—Prince Souphanouvong, all hold degrees from French universities.¹²

Although Hinayana Buddhism has been adopted as the official state religion and is the traditional faith of the Lao, French education may be said to have exerted a secularizing influence upon the Lao elite. The resulting impact has been to break the historic monopoly of the *wat* or pagoda school. This institution, which offers religious and moral training to young boys, still persists throughout the Lao areas, although its relative strength as opposed to national schools is waning.

The Lao Villager. Living primarily in the valley and central plateau regions, the Lao are closely related to the northeast Thai who live across the Mekong River. Primarily wet-rice growers, they embrace the Buddhist religion overlayed upon more ancient animistic beliefs. Thus while nearly every village has a *wat*, every household has a "spirit house" for propitiation of the *phi*—

spirits believed to exert considerable control over an individual's destiny. Closely related to Thai, the Laotian language has become infused with Pali—the language of the sacred Buddhist texts—Sanskrit, Cambodian, and French.

Although far less influenced from outside than the elite, the Lao villager has felt Western impact in part through close bonds with Thailand.¹³ French influence on the Lao villager was generally limited to the teaching offered in primary schools under the colonial regime. But generally schooling in the *wat* by the Buddhist bonzes was more readily available and held in higher social esteem. It is still too early to assess the importance of American programs in rural villages, both Lao and non-Lao; however, since 1955 an increasing number of schools and rural development projects have been undertaken, sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID, at that time, ICA). In relation to sources of modernization, it is noteworthy that American-supported foreign training for Laotians has frequently been offered in Thailand.¹⁴ Estimates calculate that between 22 and 27 per cent of the population attend primary school (i.e. first six years of school).¹⁵ In 1964–65 there was a total primary enrollment amounting to 130,457.¹⁶ Almost without exception indigenous children in the secondary schools are Lao, though the total secondary enrollment in 1964–65 was estimated at only 4,140.¹⁷

The valley-dwelling villager may be characterized as occupying an intermediate position in the social hierarchy between the Lao elite (and urban-dwelling foreign minorities) and the tribal people of the northern and eastern highlands. While still functioning in a primarily traditional social and economic pattern, he is not as geographically or culturally isolated from urban-Western influences as are his tribal countrymen.¹⁸ For example, most older members of the Lao elite have had village experience.¹⁹ The valley Lao are more likely to have contact with Laotian government officials such as the provincial Primary School Inspectors,²⁰ and government schools are more likely to

be located in villages near roads or rivers.²¹

The Tribal People. Tribal groups tend to live at higher altitudes than the Lao, although the Tai share the central plateau regions with the Lao to some extent. Also found in the mountain valleys, the Tai are wet rice agriculturalists. Above them on the mountain slopes of the whole length of the Annamitic Chain from South China to Cambodia and Vietnam are the "Kha" (which in Lao means a slave or savage), a diverse number of groups which are the aboriginal inhabitants of Laos but were driven into the mountain regions by the successive migrations of Lao and Tai from South China. Over forty different groups have been identified. They speak languages of the mon-Khmer group but possess no written language.²² It is against the religious belief of some Kha to speak or read in a foreign language, a fact which has obviously discouraging implications for the spread of national education.

In contrast the Sinicized Meo and the Yao villagers who have within the past century²³ migrated to the mountains of Northern Laos from Yunnan, often hire Chinese speaking teachers to instruct their sons in spoken and written Chinese.²⁴ Both groups practice slash-and-burn cultivation of dry rice and their important cash crop, opium.

The tribal minorities maintain important economic relationships with the Lao in which the latter tend to dominate.²⁵ Formal government contact has been more limited. Few schools have been provided for these groups, although some recent attempts at rural education under joint government/US-AID sponsorship have been made. A significant influence for change has been the activity of various Christian missionary groups among the tribal people.

Problems of Education

French Colonial Heritage. At the outset of independence the Laotians found themselves lacking in the training and skills required for national development, in part due to the colonial neglect of their educational needs. However, those who had par-

taken of what modicum of schooling had been provided by the colonial administration were thoroughly imbued with French values and culture; their resulting exclusiveness served to underwrite their positions of power. Certainly major problems of economic under-development and intermittent warfare have contributed to the fact that the Laotians still lack trained manpower, but the absence of relatively widespread education directed toward the teaching of practical skills has been a crucial factor. In a system where in 1964, 97 per cent of the total school enrollment was at primary level, 80 per cent of which was in the first (three-year) cycle,²⁶ not even basic literacy can be achieved—let alone middle-level technical skills. An official Laotian government report of 1963 acknowledged that 75 per cent of the total population had never attended any kind of formal school.²⁷ It is currently reported that only one-half of the school-age population is enrolled in schools of any kind.²⁸ Since independence the army has provided an important source of technical training, perhaps the major source. It has also provided an avenue of advancement for both village Lao and tribal people including the opportunity for training abroad. Such training does not, of course, replace the need for an effective educational system.

Foreign Assistance Programs and Other External Influences. Whatever positive values they serve in the development of educational opportunity, in Laos programs of outside assistance clearly intensify ethnic and social divisions.

The clearest case in point is that of continuing French aid. The French did not withdraw completely after independence, but at the request of the Laotian government and in view of the country's inability to produce enough secondary teachers to teach at secondary level, France contributes much of the administrative personnel and staff for the existing secondary schools and thereby exerts continuing influence upon the elite. This does not mean that large numbers of French staff members are necessary, however, since there are only eight sec-

ondary schools in all of Laos, five of which provide only the first four-year cycle (*collège*); the others offer the full seven-year course (*lycée*) to the level of the French *Baccalauréat*.²⁹ Although there are still no universities in Laos, a majority of students who seek higher education abroad still go to France. In 1963, for example, 121³⁰ of the 175 reported to be studying abroad³¹ were enrolled in French universities.

Although France provided some technical training scholarships abroad as part of an overall technical cooperation program with her former Indo-China colonies, "because of political events" these programs in Laos and Vietnam were dropped in 1964.³² But by virtually controlling Laotian secondary education, where French is the official language of instruction, and therefore, logically appealing to a majority of applicants for foreign higher education, the French influence the powerful Lao elite, and at a comparatively modest cost.

The Colombo Plan, UNESCO, and to a greater extent the United States have tackled the very difficult problem of assisting the Laotians in rural development, an important aspect of which is extending education at the primary level. The Colombo Plan's contribution has been mainly in the area of technical assistance programs and scholarships for study abroad in the more advanced of its member nations. UNESCO has contributed to the extension of free compulsory primary education for all Asia in conformity with its resolution adopted at the Karachi meeting of 1959-60; its chief means to this end has been the dispatch of advisory groups to work with Laotian counterparts in the Ministry of National Education.

In part as a result of the conviction that building a socially and economically viable independent state is the best counterweight to Pathet Lao ascendancy, the United States government has invested large sums in the field of Laotian primary education and rural development. These programs have extended to the tribal populations as well as the Laotian villagers. Jointly sponsored by the RLG and the United States and staffed largely by US/AID or International

Voluntary Services personnel, the programs encourage local self-help; villages contribute local materials, and construct school buildings. A major objective of such programs has been to convince villagers that conditions can be improved through cooperation with the RLG and thus to reduce the alienation between the widely separated rural dweller and the government elite.³³ The United States has supported numerous advanced technical training opportunities outside Laos, principally in Thailand; such training is offered to a lesser extent in the Philippines and the United States. However, only 36 Laotian students were studying at the university level in the United States in 1964-65.³⁴

Particularly since the late 1950's, large numbers of the tribal people have been driven from their mountain homes as a result of communist guerrilla attacks and Pathet Lao/Neutralist fighting in these areas.³⁵ The Laotian government is faced with the problems of their resettlement, not the least of which is educational provision. As yet it is too early to determine the extent to which ethnic minority presence in traditionally Lao areas will affect the social hierarchy.

Special note should be taken of the work of various European and American Christian missionary groups beginning with the Swiss Brethren who have been active in the mountain regions since about the turn of the century. Later the Christian and Missionary Alliance began work in the northern areas. A Protestant translation of the Bible into Lao appeared in 1926. At odds with the French colonial administration during this period, inasmuch as the latter preferred missionary activity restricted to the Roman Catholics, these groups had their main successes among the Meo and the Khmu.³⁶ They have established a number of Bible schools and attempted to teach groups such as the Meo in their own language. This particular type of missionary activity has been opposed by the present government which places emphasis on Laotianization.

The Laotian Educational Reform of 1962. The heart of the recent educational reforms,

which include reorganization of the Ministry of National Education along more functional lines,³⁷ lies in the establishment of widespread rural community education centers and major curriculum revision at the six-year elementary level. The Lao school is defined by the Reform as "... no longer an academic institution, but a system in the service of the country's economic development."³⁸ New syllabuses were supplied to teachers instructing them in the use of the revised curriculum, which dramatically reduced the hours of French language instruction (French is introduced in the fourth year of school) and other academic subjects. The amount of time devoted to the mastery of practical subjects such as agriculture and hygiene was increased.³⁹ It might be wondered whether such a program without complementary secondary school reforms would not in fact widen the gap between rural and urban Lao, since such schools would be unlikely to equip students to pass the upper primary examination which admits them to the French language college (lower secondary school). The Reform was indeed subject to controversy, but its acceptance has by no means guaranteed its successful implementation. There are plans to revise the secondary school curriculum, but as of this writing no action has been taken, due in large part probably to the shortage of qualified indigenous secondary teaching personnel.⁴⁰

The Reform appears to offer no new guarantees to assist the tribal people more than before, although its tenets suggest more general application to the needs of Laos' predominantly rural population, whether Lao or non-Lao, than evidenced previously. The creation of some 800 post-Reform community centers, where instruction according to the new curriculum is theoretically offered to children and adults alike, relies to a considerable extent upon the services of former Buddhist bonzes in the absence of trained teaching personnel.⁴¹

A major deterrent to the Reform's success appears to be the lack of a complementary provision for the training of teachers to instruct according to the new syllabuses.

Both American and Lao observers cite the Lao leadership's apathy toward implementation of the agriculturally-based curriculum reforms. An AID advisor points to what he calls the lack of "personal dedication among many leaders" as a deterrent to the Reform's implementation, while a Lao representative of the Commission on Rural Affairs wrote recently of the "obstacles standing in the way of this and other attempts to modernize" in the Vientiane French language periodical, *Lao Presse*:

The officials currently installed in the developing countries have benefited from Western education and have attained power or responsibilities in great measure thanks to the knowledge acquired in the Western type educational institutions. The majority of these persons believe that there is no reason to change a system that has served them so well.⁴²

The Role of the Teacher. Laotian social structure is not totally inflexible as has been demonstrated by village recruitment into the teaching profession. Along with the army, police, and lower levels of the government bureaucracy, the teaching profession serves to modify the narrow leadership at the top of the Lao social hierarchy. It is significant in this regard that a number of middle- to higher-level Laotian government officials began their careers as teachers.⁴³ However, certain factors limit the effectiveness of a potentially mobile teacher "class." The primary level teacher is recruited for courses ranging from a few weeks to one or more years at teacher training centers upon completion of the sixth year of school. Inasmuch as he has received no academic secondary training to prepare for higher studies, his professional future is limited. Of course, graduates of the few secondary schools (estimated at about 125 per year⁴⁴), after a secondary teacher training course, are eligible for staff placement in a collège or lycée or other government position. Despite the respect accorded Lao teachers in the villages, the primary teacher's salary is very low; recent devaluations in currency have placed the teacher in even more disadvantaged financial circumstances.

As might be expected, a disproportionately high number of primary teachers have been recruited from among the Lao villages inasmuch as children there are more likely to have completed the six-year government elementary school course than their tribal counterparts. Yet their placement in tribal villages has proved less than successful. For example, one report alludes to the improvement of school conditions after Lao teachers were replaced by teachers of tribal backgrounds.⁴⁵ A particularly difficult problem, which is not unknown to other developing rural countries, exists in the fact that teachers from the villages would prefer to remain near urban centers like Vientiane. A 1959 incident is illustrative: a group of Lao teachers had just returned from a United Nations-sponsored Fundamental Education Center in Thailand where they had been trained to work in rural villages. Their European advisor, with the consent of the Ministry of National Education's representative, suggested establishing the project's headquarters about 60 miles from Vientiane. However, the teachers protested, and ultimately the project was set up on the outskirts of the capital city.⁴⁶

Needs and Obstacles. With the uncertainties of war in Laos as well as other demands upon the national budget, it is unlikely that financial support will soon be forthcoming for educational provision sufficient to train manpower for increased economic development and more effective administration. Thus, limited financial resources and the results of shifting "insecure" areas combine to produce a dim picture of immediate prospects for educational progress.

In the meantime, the opportunity for upward social mobility will probably be achieved more readily from among the Lao villagers as a result of their greater access to educational facilities, than among the tribal people. Such mobility is apt to increase particularly as the elite finds itself increasingly dependent upon the skills of greater numbers. In this respect the teaching profession constitutes a channel for increased integration of the Lao elite and the Lao

villager, with whom the elite shares a common cultural heritage.

The impact of the mass refugee resettlement of mainly tribal minorities in predominantly Lao areas—125 to 150 thousand since the 1960 *coup*—has yet to be interpreted. It may be that permanent resettlement and eventual integration with the Lao will ensue, but in view of strongly expressed preferences for the mountain regions and general mutual disdain between highlander and lowlander, these minorities may eventually seek to reclaim their land. Yet such forced geographic shifting provides at least one fundamental basis for integration: close contact. Furthermore, it will be difficult for the RLG to protest, as it has in the past, that these groups are too remotely situated to be effectively brought into the national system of education.

When it is considered that only 1 per cent of the age group was enrolled in secondary schools in 1959, there is an obvious need to increase opportunities for secondary education; the resulting supply of secondary graduates would provide a reservoir of people equipped to train as secondary teachers, utilize much-needed (although almost non-existent) higher-level technical educational facilities, and pursue university-level study. Furthermore, reforms in secondary curriculum are necessary to direct students more toward the requirements of their own society. Finally, a Laotian university focused upon the needs of the country itself is required which can aid in the production of a truly "national" leadership. Though the legal basis for such a university has been established, such an institution has yet to appear.

Judging from the evidence—including appallingly unreliable and conflicting statistics—all educational facilities need to be expanded in Laos. Only bootstrap operations, conceived like the community development project of the 1962 Reform and wholeheartedly supported by those in authority, can overcome the enormous obstacle of limited resources. It would be hoped that the nature and direction of educational expansion will mediate to weld rather than

intensify existing divisions, and, in turn, contribute to the overall ability of the Laotian "nation" to coalesce.

The Pathet Lao Alternative. Laos has, of course, been engaged in a civil war of varying intensity for more than the past decade. Unfortunately virtually no information is available on the educational system being developed in those portions of Laos controlled by the Pathet Lao. Significantly the mountainous northern and eastern areas which they hold are peopled to an overwhelming degree by tribal groups virtually indistinguishable from those who live across the border in neighboring areas of North Vietnam and China.

Recently the *Vietnam Courier* (October 7, 1965) published in Hanoi carried a long article on the Pathet Lao and their claimed accomplishments. The section dealing with education is quoted below in full.

The movement for mass education and against illiteracy began in 1955. In 1961, the Central Committee of the Neo Lao Haksat laid down the directions for the building of a national and progressive education. Today the teaching is done entirely in Lao language. 1964 saw the completion of the development of a script for the Meo national minority, an important minority group. By the end of the same year, the number of primary school children in the liberated zone had surpassed 36,200 (the figure was 11,400 for the whole of Laos in 1945). The number of secondary pupils was 250 (formerly there was none in this zone). In addition, there are now 4 teachers' training schools, and 2 adult complementary education schools. In 1964 there were 380,000 textbooks, as compared with only 40,000 in 1963.

It is helpful in placing the work of the Pathet Lao in perspective to bear in mind two crucial factors. First to a major degree the Pathet Lao Communist movement is based on the tribal groups. Notwithstanding the fact that certain groups, especially the Meo, have been among the best soldiers fighting on the side of the Royal Government, the Meo are split among themselves. The divisions appear to reflect historical splits and competing traditional leadership groups. The use of tribal languages in ele-

mentary schools parallels the practice of North Vietnam and China in their flexibility in the forms used as opposed to the simultaneous stress on uniformity of content.

The second major factor is the paternal role of the North Vietnamese. Despite Lao distrust of the Vietnamese and pre-colonial warfare a number of the top Lao elite were educated in Vietnam, particularly Hanoi, during the colonial period. A notable member of this group is Prince Souphanouvong, the formal head of the Pathet Lao.⁴⁷ Perhaps the most important point is that by 1965 the organizational structure set up by the Pathet Lao in the areas they occupy posed more of a long term threat to the Royal Government than the military conflict.⁴⁸ A key factor in effective administration is, of course, trained personnel and it would be logical to suppose that the Pathet Lao have given high priority to establishing an effective educational system in those areas which they control.

The future evolution of the Laotian educational system depends on the resolution of the current political-military conflict, unless one envisages a permanent division of Laos into two separate states, an outcome which appears highly unlikely. Just as World War II effectively destroyed the political structure of many states, particularly in Eastern Europe, so the Japanese conquest and subsequent achievement of independence combined with revolutionary warfare in Laos has permanently altered the traditional social and political structures and created types of aspirations which were largely non-existent before. The present struggle is in long range terms focused on who will oversee the problems of nation-building.⁴⁹ Both sides are making preliminary attempts in this direction and will need well trained personnel to be effective.

REFERENCES

¹ Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 194-196.

² Only 34% of the population interviewed in the capital city knew the name of the king, 32% in the provincial capitals, and 19% in the

villages sampled. *Information and Attitudes in Laos*. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Social Science Research, 1959), p. 35. At the same time, the then Crown Prince and present King was virtually unknown to villagers a few score miles from the royal capital.

³ Clement Johnson, *Southeast Asia: Report on U. S. Foreign Assistance Programs*. U. S. Senate Survey #7 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1957), p. 11. Villagers, the overwhelming majority of the population, tended to think in terms of the princely states which existed before the coming of the French.

⁴ *Education in Asia*. (Japan: Ministry of Education, 1964), p. 15. It should be pointed out that literacy in Pali, the language of the Buddhist religious texts, is probably not accounted for in this estimate.

⁵ Joel M. Halpern, *Economy and Society in Laos: A Brief Survey*. Monograph Series No. 5. (New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1964), pp. 10-11, 188.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁷ Frank M. Le Bar and Adrienne Studdard, eds., *Laos: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture*. (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1960), p. 43. The approximate nature of these figures as well as all other population statistics dealing with Laos should be stressed.

⁸ Joel M. Halpern, "The Role of the Chinese in Lao Society," *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XLIX, Part I, July, 1961.

⁹ Le Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁰ Joel M. Halpern, *Government, Politics, and Social Structure in Laos: A Study of Tradition and Innovation*. Monograph Series No. 4. (New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1964), pp. 5, 97-98.

¹¹ Le Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 80. Of a total of 525 students enrolled in the University of Hanoi in 1921-22, 5 came from Laos, in 1929-30 there were 7. Joanne Marie Coyle, *Indochinese Administration and Education—French Policy and Practice, 1917-45*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1963, pp. 187-90, cited in Harry J. Benda, "Political Elites in Colonial Southeast Asia: An Historical Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. VII, No. 3 (April 1965), p. 243.

¹² Sithat Sithibourn, *Biographies: Des Personnalités du Royaume du Laos* (Vientiane: Lao Presse, 1960): *passim*; Joel M. Halpern, "Laos Profiles," Laos Project Paper No. 18, 1961, *passim*.

¹³ Le Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁴ Halpern, *Government, Politics, and Social Structure*, p. 27.

¹⁵ Joel M. Halpern, "Laotian Educational Statistics," Laos Project Paper No. 7, 1961, p. 15.

¹⁶ Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Laos, "Rapport sur le mouvement éducatif pendant l'année 1964-65." Geneva, Conférence Internationale de l'Instruction Publique, Juillet, 1965. (Mimeographed), p. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ "Modern" may be a better term than "Western" since the former includes Pathet Lao inspired pressures for change.

¹⁹ Many members of the elite began their careers as local administrators, technicians, or teachers.

²⁰ In Laos these may be compared to state superintendents of public instruction in the United States.

²¹ Halpern, *Government, Politics, and Social Structure in Laos*, pp. 169-70. Lao teachers sent to tribal villages often keenly feel their isolation.

²² Le Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

²³ Le Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

²⁴ Keiji Iwata, "Minority Groups in Northern Laos: Especially the Yao," Laos Project Paper No. 16, 1961. (Mimeographed) p. 14.

²⁵ Iwata, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²⁶ The authors are grateful for information on 1965 school enrollments in Laos provided by the United States Agency for International Development.

²⁷ "Report of Member States: Laos." Geneva, International Bureau of Education and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1962. (Mimeographed), p. 3.

²⁸ See footnote number 26.

²⁹ *United Nations Statistical Yearbook*, 1964, No. 16. (New York: Statistical Office of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1965), p. 680. However, on October 1965 survey by US/AID for the 1964-65 school year suggests that there were only 6 public secondary schools in operation; 3 collèges, 2 lycées offering the full *Baccalauréat II* course (7 years); according to this report, 7 additional private schools, of which 3 were Chinese, offered up to 4 years of secondary schooling; 1 private Catholic school presented its first class of graduates for the *Baccalauréat II* after having completed 7-year secondary programs.

³⁰ Information supplied by the French Information Office, New York City, November, 1965.

³¹ "Laos," *International Yearbook of Education*. (Geneva/Paris: International Bureau of Education and UNESCO, 1963), p. 221.

³² *Direction Générale des Affaires Culturelles et Techniques: Rapport d'Activité*, 1964. (Paris: Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 1965), p. 40.

³³ "Mu Ban Samaki Program—FY 1963/1964," International Voluntary Service Report.

(August 16, 1962). (Mimeographed), p. 1.

³⁴ *Open Doors: Report on International Exchange* (New York: Institute of International Education, 1965). It is certainly an open question as to how many of the foreign university trained Lao return home and of those who do return home, how many desire or are able to use their education effectively.

³⁵ For special reference to ethnic minority refugee resettlement, see section on Laos in Peter Kunstadter, ed., *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Central Governments*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

³⁶ Le Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 60 and George L. Barney, "The Meo: An Incipient Church," *Practical Anthropology*, No. 4, No. 2, 1957, pp. 31-50.

³⁷ For a discussion of organization of the Ministry of National Education prior to the 1962 Reform, see Kathrine G. Heath, *Ministries of Education: Their Function and Organization*, U. S. Office of Education Bulletin No. 21 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Gov't Printing Office, 1961). The main tenets of the 1962 Reform are contained in *The International Yearbook of Education*. Vol. XXV Paris/Geneva: UNESCO/I.B.E., 1963), pp. 220-223.

³⁸ *International Yearbook of Education*, 1963, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-222.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222. For information on the pre-Reform curriculum see *Rapport Succinct sur le Mouvement Éducatif, Année Scolaire 1962-63*, presented to the I.B.E. Conference in Geneva in July, 1963. (Mimeographed), p. 4.

⁴⁰ Not only are insufficient numbers of indigenous secondary school teachers being produced, but many who are so qualified enter government service, the police, military, or other fields. In this connection, the relatively poor salaries in education have been a problem.

⁴¹ "Literacy, Progress and Projects: Some Facts and Figures," *UNESCO Features*, No. 466 (September 1965), p. 6.

⁴² "Education and Rural Development," *Lao Presse*, No. 4106, (June 26, 1965), p. c1.

⁴³ Halpern, *Government, Politics, and Social Structure in Laos*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ See Reference number 26.

⁴⁵ "Mu Ban Samaki Program," p. 3.

⁴⁶ Halpern, *Government, Politics, and Social Structure in Laos*, p. 37.

⁴⁷ These points are well developed in Bernard B. Fall, "The Pathet Lao, a 'Liberation' Party," in Robert A. Scalapino, ed., *The Communist Revolution in Asia* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 173-197.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁴⁹ Joel M. Halpern, "Laos, Future Prospects and Their Limitations," *Asian Survey*, January 1966, pp. 59-65.